Coca-Cola

The birth of what people call today “delicious and refreshing” began May 8, 1886 in Atlanta, Georgia. A local pharmacist named John Stith Pemberton produced syrup of the popular drink and took it to a local pharmacy where it was sampled and sold for five cents a glass. Carbonated water was added to the syrup to create the fountain drink, which is now one of the most popular soft drinks sold worldwide.

Why the name Coca-Cola you ask? Well the name derived from the main ingredients used in the syrup and that the ingredients were strictly “medicinal.” Coca was from the addition of Coca leaves and Cola was from the addition of Kola nuts, which is where the caffine comes from. At the time the first batch of this syrup was sold, it was marketed as a medicine as other potions were. What is funny though is that the actual Coca-Cola website doesn’t contain a single piece of information stating that there was once cocaine in its product, even though that is how they drew up the name for the beverage. The ingredients to the beverage now are simply unknown. A friend’s father, Antonio Gomez, works, as a mixer at the Coca-Cola Company in Houston and he himself doesn’t know what is in the syrup. “It comes pre-made and we just toss it in the mixer to add the carbonated water,” says Mr. Gomez. The Coca-Cola recipe is locked up in a vault in Atlanta, Georgia, no one but a few owners of the Coca-Cola Company know what all the secrets are about. “It’s one of the world’s best guarded secrets.” (4)

Coca-Cola has had a very successful run since it first came out on the market. It all almost came crashing down when New Coke was introduced and wasn’t received well with consumers. They all banded together to not drink New Coke until the product was redone to its original form. That’s when Classic became part of the Coca-Cola can name and hit store shelves as quickly as possible. This was the biggest marketing mistake in history the company had ever faced. Today, Coca-Cola sells 1.4 servings of its product each day. It’s even popular all around the world. The Coke can is as easily recognizable, even to someone in Tokyo. On the other hand, Coca-Cola has never been quite as hip as its competitor, Pepsi. Pepsi markets to mostly to the younger generation of consumers, “But is that really enough to keep consumers interested in the brand after they grow up?”(3) The top three selling soft drinks are Coca-Cola at number one, Pepsi at a close second and followed by Mountain Dew. Numbers change periodically, but Coke always has the upper hand when it comes to the Holidays and different sporting events. The image of Santa Claus on the Coke can was made especially for the Coca-Cola Company and recently they’ve promoted the 2010 FIFA World Cup held in South Africa over the summer.

Coca-Cola puts out advertisements to make people want their product. They play on people’s emotions by making commercials aimed towards certain consumers. They take a friendly image, which may not have anything to do with their product and associate the two. For example, there are many advertisements that show Santa Claus with a Coke. Santa Claus had nothing to do with this product, but they used him to appeal to small children. They make them think Santa drinks Coke so they will want to, as well. Other ads aimed towards children are ones with polar bears, penguins, or other animals. Lots of Coca-Cola commercials show people singing and dancing. These advertisements are aimed towards teens and adults. It shows everyone having such a good time. One example of this is shown in a 1989 commercial with people, from younger kids to older ladies, dancing while the slogan “Can’t Beat the Feeling” is repeated throughout the song. In one commercial, around 1989, Coca-Cola aimed towards football fans by using football players to rap about Diet Coke. In a more recent advertisement they used the well-known video game “Grand Theft Auto”. In this game, the player makes the character do all types of violent crimes. However, in this Coke advertisement the character goes into a store, buys a Coke, and suddenly he is the nicest person. He returns an old ladies purse to her after someone tries to steal it, puts out a fire, gives a homeless man money, and other nice random acts. These are all examples of ways that the Coca-Cola Company gets people to consume their product.

Coca-Cola and popular culture influence each other. Pop culture is influenced by Coke because the consumers made it popular. When Coca-Cola changed their drink to the new Coke, consumers did not like it and wanted it changed back. The company had no choice but to change it back if they wanted people to keep buying their product. They changed it back and called it Coca-Cola classic. This shows how people have the power in determining what businesses will be successful; they just don’t really realize it. In this way, consumers control the product. If they don’t like it, they are not going to buy it so Coke has to make it to where they like it. Also, Coca-Cola is influenced by popular culture. In their advertisements there are lots images of happiness and they use many slogans to draw people in. Their consumers really buy into the happy people and catchy songs in their ads. Some of their previous slogans were, ‘Work Refreshed’ (1941), ‘There’s Nothing Like a Coke’ (1957), ‘Things go Better with Coke’ (1963), and ‘Always Coca-Cola’ (1993). People really get caught up in these messages so they think if you are not drinking this soda, then you are not part of the “in” crowd.

Coca-Cola became a part of American culture. In 1955 Coke’s slogan was ‘Americans Prefer Taste’ and in 1986 it was ‘Red, White, and You’. The ‘Red, White, and You’ campaign really made people think of Coke as part of their culture. “In surveys at the time, seventy-five percent of respondents said they considered Coca-Cola classic a symbol of America” (Two Tastes and Two Campaigns, para. 1). Coca-Cola is consumed in more than 195 countries. In all of their ads, the logo and the slogans are always in English because young people see English as an exotic language. “The product is of American origin and thus is always associated with the country, its culture and people” (Retail Poster, para. 4). The “advertisements reflect American values and ways of living and carry these values over to other cultures. They do not change their campaigns to blend with the local culture in a country; rather they incorporate elements of that culture” (History, para.2). The elements are the people and information that is not really important. In 1971, Coke made a popular advertisement with a very catchy song called “I’d like to buy the world a Coke”. The ad was filmed on top of a hill in Italy where people came together dressed in clothes from different cultures around the world. This ad’s message was “that Coca-Cola is a bond connecting people to one another” (Trial and Error, para. 4). People in the United States loved this commercial so much that it is known as “one of the best commercials of all time” (A Commercial Success, para. 3).

Coca Cola advertising has evolved over the years just as its’ packaging has evolved. (13) Coca-Cola was first packaged in what are now its’ iconic glass bottles and glasses. In the 1960s it became available in cans first to the military and then consumers. In the 1970s, it was introduced in PET plastic bottles and has been marketed in that form ever since. (6) Although the company regularly advertises on its website that it is working to be environmentally friendly; by introduction of its latest product, the plant bottle for instance,(7) there is still more responsibility that could be taken. Coca-Cola has begun manufacturing their plastic bottles using more recycled plastic resin rather than virgin plastic in efforts to cut costs. (10) The advertising for environmental responsibility is on the website, not on television. Television advertising has proven to be very lucrative for Coca-Cola. They have developed commercials strategically to become the leader of soft drinks around the globe. Consumers are buying in by the billions to Coca-Colas’ message that they can get refreshment, relaxation, quench their thirst, even be happier with the relatively small purchase of a single bottle of their soft drink. (8) All the advertising in the world cannot change consumer behavior. Many in the world are aware of the giant floating island of plastic in the Pacific Ocean, made up mainly of plastic bottles.(11) It would stand to reason that the manufacturer of one of the most popular beverages in the world would accept responsibility to at least attempt to aid in measures to reduce plastic waste. Marketing and advertising measures should be taken to increase consumers’ awareness about recycling measures they can take. The only places a person sees messages regarding recycling efforts (or lack of them) or are even made aware of the global environmental issues such as the giant floating mass of plastic waste in the Pacific is by searching for it on the internet or watching subject specific programing. The types of programs and subjects not generally “surfed” by the greatest consumer population we have, youths.

Youth are our future. Coca-Cola has taken a responsible stance as far as advertising geared towards children. (12) Perhaps they could establish an initiative to incorporate the desire to be more environmentally responsible as part of their advertising campaigns. Glass can be completely recycled and reused; while plastic cannot. It is more profitable for manufacturers to use plastic even though they are aware the rate of recycling plastic bottles is traditionally very poor, even in areas where deposit s are given for returns.(10) There could be additional research and development in the areas of more economical and efficient recycling methods and uses for recycled plastic products. It appears that most of the research is geared toward developing cheaper ways to make already cheap plastic packaging which in the long run leads to more profit for the company and its shareholders. The bottom line in the eyes of corporate America is profit now, not the later ramifications; especially environmental ramifications.

Coca-Cola advertisements have targeted happiness, harmony and world peace. Their commercials are recognized the world over. (13) Perhaps they are reluctant to not be the “cool” company if they tout recycling and global environmental responsibility. Being an iconic company, they should take that risk in their advertising. The long term positive results should outweigh the possible short term negativity. So much is spent on advertising to buy the soft drink. At least a portion or percentage of that should also be spent and more widely advertised toward being more environmentally responsible. It should be win-win for Coca-Cola and the globe.

Despite Coca-cola’s unbelievably good taste, the fact is, the Coca-Cola company is out to sell a product. That being said, the consumers are not given all of the facts. Let’s face it, almost everything we eat or drink is unhealthy in some way, and we usually ignore that fact. Sometimes we may not have any knowledge of something being unhealthy, and we prefer it that way, otherwise we would be eating and drinking things that taste horrible. Unfortunately, we buy into all the advertisements we see because we are told that these products are the best, and will make us happier, and enjoy life. So, who wouldn’t want a coke?

The question we should be asking is, why *shouldn’t* you want a coke? As consumers we only see one side of the product. That side being the side that the company portrays to give the illusion that their product is flawless, and will make your life better not matter what. But what about what the advertisements don’t tell you. In the following paragraphs I am going to open your eyes to the world of Coke you probably have no knowledge of.

The Coca-Cola Company and many of its products have been criticized for a number of reasons. Some of them include providing an unhealthy product, causing harm to the environment, and marketing unhealthy products to children.

The most important unknown facts about the drink are the effects on health. Coke has been accused of having a very dangerous level of acidity for drinking. For the most part, Coke has not shown to be more harmful than any other soft drinks or acidic fruit juices. It is very harmful for the teeth to be frequently exposed to acidic drinks, and this can definitely increase the risk of tooth damage. Another problem is that Coke is made with high fructose corn syrup instead of sucrose because it’s more affordable. This is frowned upon because the corn that is used to produce high fructose corn syrup comes from genetically altered plants. High fructose corn syrup has been shown to metabolize differently in the body than sugar, and has possible links to obesity and diabetes.

As discussed earlier, Coca Cola became apart of America culture and is looked upon as a symbol of our nation. This makes it very easy for TV advertisements to influence children to want their product. The advertisers know how to target an audience. They combine the product with something that is socially acceptable at the present time. Unfortunately children don’t know any better, so when they see this awesome product on television, they automatically want it. As long as these companies are targeting young audiences they will sell their product because we are a spoiled nation, and most kids find a way to get what they want.

In addition to targeting young audiences, Coca- Cola also has their ways of swaying the general public to purchase not only their product, but also Coca-Cola memorabilia. You can purchase almost anything you can think of with the Coca-cola logo on it. It ranges from vintage art, to vintage coke bottles, as well as Christmas ornaments, plates, cups, stuffed animals like the famous Coca Cola polar bear, and much, much more. Because the Coca Cola symbol is such an icon to the nation many of these collectible items can get very pricy. The more vintage it is, the more money you have to be willing to pay.

From the very beginning Coca Cola has done a great job of becoming apart of pop culture, and is now a major symbol of the American culture. This demonstrates how influential TV advertisements are. Even if people don’t drink coke, they are still familiar with it and where it came from. The media itself is a huge part of pop culture, and influences everyone, everyday. The advertising industry does a great job at selling products to the public. They know exactly what to say to make us want their product.

In conclusion, from all the negatives and positives about coke, it is still here today, and remains one of the most popular soft drinks of all time. Because it has been around for so long, and is an icon of our country, I doubt the Coca Cola sales would drop in the near future. I hope this paper has provided you with a wide range of knowledge about America’s favorite soft drink.

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